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FNCS Nutrition Promotion and Education Cooperative Agreement Program

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

**Applications Must Be
Received By
October 31, 2005**

Submit Applications to:

**Lisa Johnson, Grants Officer
USDA: Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services
3101 Park Center Drive, Rm 738
Alexandria, VA 22302**

**Released by:
Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion &
Food and Nutrition Service of the
Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services, USDA**

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Attachment A – SF 424, Application for Federal Assistance
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**Attachment D – OMB No. 1890-0014, Survey on Ensuring Equal
Opportunity for Applicants**

FNCS Nutrition Promotion and Education Cooperative Agreement Program

I. INTRODUCTION

The Food, Nutrition and Consumer Service (FNCS) will provide competitive cooperative agreement awards in 2005 to two to five qualified applicants to develop a multi-year, multi-dimensional nutrition promotion and education campaign.

As authorized under Section 1472 (b) of the National Agriculture Research, Extension and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3318(b), Section 1472(b)), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), FNCS is soliciting proposals to provide two to five cooperative agreement awards. No funds will be provided by USDA under these agreements. The purpose of the FNCS Nutrition Promotion and Education Cooperative Agreement Program is to facilitate cooperation with public and/or private sector organizations to increase the level of resources devoted to consistent, multi-channel strategies to promote the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and the *MyPyramid* Food Guidance System to better influence eating and physical activity behaviors. The cooperative agreements shall specifically serve to link science-based dietary guidance to the nutrition needs of consumers, facilitate nutrition policy coordination, and promote nutrition education.

The awardees will be selected on a competitive basis, based on an objective review of all proposals according to the technical evaluation criteria outlined in this Request for Application. FNCS has structured this award as a cooperative agreement and plans to work closely with the awardees throughout the duration of this project. The duration of the awarded cooperative agreements will be no longer than five years from the date of award.

II. OVERVIEW

Given the high cost of disease related to poor dietary practices, investment in education and promotion strategies that result in even small behavior changes are likely to be cost-effective. Research has shown that well-designed and tested primary prevention interventions can change behaviors. Furthermore, studies have increasingly identified environmental factors as powerful influences in shaping nutrition and health behaviors. Today's food marketplace, featuring the convenient availability and heavy promotional advertising of foods, has very powerful impacts on food choices – impacts that do not always contribute to a healthful diet.

The release of the 2005 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and the *MyPyramid* Food Guidance System positions FNCS better than ever to make a difference in the lives of Americans. However, to take full advantage of these new tools to improve the nutrition

and promote the health of Americans, USDA needs to enlist the support of public and/or private sector cooperators with a clear interest in delivering high-quality nutrition information, education and promotion to its customers.

These cooperative agreements, which will not require the transfer of funds, will help to advance the FNCS mission to promote the Nation's health without the need for additional appropriated resources, and will maximize the impact of the resources already invested. USDA will evaluate the success of these initial cooperative agreements in determining whether to expand the program in future years.

III. WHO MAY APPLY

FNCS is seeking to work with public and/or private non-profit or for-profit cooperating organizations offering nationwide reach and the ability to commit sufficient resources to support a robust array of strategies and activities.

IV. TECHNICAL PROPOSAL

As part of the review and subsequent award process, USDA is seeking information from applicants including a description of their proposed approach to develop the campaign, resource allocation projections, staffing levels, successes, failures, and past performance history.

FNCS expects that the cooperators will conduct a multi-year, multi-dimensional campaign to promote the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and the *MyPyramid* Food Guidance System to better educate American consumers on nutrition literacy and the way to a healthy lifestyle. Respondents have a full range of discretion in how they design and develop a proposal. However, there are definite proposal components required of each respondent.

To make clear the intent and spirit of the cooperative agreements, cooperators must agree to work closely with FNCS by:

- Furthering the USDA's mission and goal to promote the Nation's nutrition and health through science-based dietary guidance, education, and promotion;
- Respecting the Federal nutrition guidance and nutrition promotion content, including the most current *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*; the *MyPyramid* symbol, figure, slogan and other intellectual property, and related usage guidelines; FNS nutrition promotion campaign materials, messages and their usage guidelines;
- Agreeing to approval by USDA of cooperator-developed messages in advance of their dissemination;
- Committing to making scientifically-based nutrition information meaningful to consumers through communication and other education efforts that are positive, upbeat, and inherently empowering to foster healthy behavior change;

- Focusing cooperative activities on nutrition education and nutrition promotion strategies, rather than product marketing;
- Agreeing not to use the agreement to support, promote, or suggest USDA approval of products that are inconsistent with a balanced, healthful diet and/or healthy lifestyles;
- Making clear in all communications that the cooperative agreement does not imply USDA endorsement of any product, service, or organization;
- Disseminating nutrition information and materials at no additional cost to consumers;
- Agreeing to review and assess the effectiveness of partnership strategies to communicate the dietary guidance and promotion messages on a periodic basis, not less than annually;
- Cooperating with state cooperative extension services to the extent practicable; and
- Coordinating efforts and serving as liaison with other cooperating entities, such as state cooperative extension services and/or other entity providing the needed nationwide reach, as outlined in the written binding agreement.

As cooperators, USDA agencies (the Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion and/or the Food and Nutrition Service) would:

- Permit the appropriate (i.e., consistent with usage guidelines and cooperative agreements) use of its name and program symbols in recognition of the cooperation by awarded cooperators on educational materials, product packaging, promotional efforts, advertising, and other venues as appropriate.
- Review and approve partnership developed messages.
- Provide technical assistance to partners on the incorporation and use of FNCS food guidance and nutrition messages and materials in informational and promotional efforts.

In addition to the aforementioned information, **applicants should consider and address the following:**

- Cooperator's goals and objectives.
- Theme or area of focus for nutrition promotion and education strategies.
- Specific nutrition guidance and promotion initiative(s) (*MyPyramid*, *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, Team Nutrition, Eat Smart. Play Hard.™, etc.) with which the cooperator sought to make use.
- Identified target audience(s).
- Nationwide reach.
- Assessment of "operating environment," such as entity's current marketing efforts, new market niches being pursued, and other opportunities available to advance goals.
- Description of intended nutrition education and promotion strategies.
- A project timeline with specific tasks and milestones, including a process for regular reporting of accomplishments to FNCS.

When publicizing any output from the cooperative agreements, including, but not limited to any written materials such as press releases, pamphlets, articles and other media materials, the cooperator must acknowledge support of USDA, and/or the appropriate USDA agency, in substantially the following form:

"This project has been coordinated at least in part with the Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, U.S. Department of Agriculture. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the view or policies of the U.S. Department

of Agriculture, nor does the mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.”

Awardees are required to comply with all applicable laws and regulations in regard to civil rights. All materials developed under this Cooperative Agreement must also include a non-discrimination statement, in substantially the following terms:

“In accordance with Federal law and USDA policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sexual orientation, age, religion, political beliefs, or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Ave, SW, Washington, DC, 20250 or call 202-720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.”

V. DURATION OF THE COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS

The cooperative agreements will be multi-year with the intended duration to be proposed within an application and agreed upon by both parties. All activities conducted under the cooperative agreements must be completed within five years of the date of the award, or as otherwise indicated in the binding written agreement.

VI. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Awardees will be required to submit biannual Progress Reports and one final Project Summary Report.

These reports must address:

- major accomplishments for each proposed projects/activities
- major problems or delays encountered and how they will be resolved
- additional detail on work planned for the upcoming six months, and any other pertinent information

VII. APPLICABLE REGULATIONS

The cooperative agreements will be awarded in accordance with the following regulations:

- a. 7 CFR Part 3015: “Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations”
- b. 7 CFR Part 3017: “Government-wide Debarment and Suspension (Non-Procurement)”
- c. 7 CFR Part 3018: “New Restrictions on Lobbying”
- d. 7 CFR Part 3019: “Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and other Non-Profit Organization”.
- e. 7 CFR Part 3021: “Government-wide Requirements for Drug-free Workplace (Financial Assistance)”
- f. 7 CFR Part 3052: “Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-Profit Organizations”

Copies of these documents are available from the Grants Officer, Lisa Johnson, upon request.

VIII. TIME LINE

RFA release date	September 29, 2005
Proposals to FNCS	October 31, 2005
Award Announcement	December 2005
Start Date	January 2, 2006, or sooner as determined by cooperating parties.

IX. APPLICATION FORMAT

It is strongly suggested that applicants adhere to the following format. Use of this format will make it easier for the proposal reviewers to locate the requested information and to evaluate your proposal.

The original proposal must be ready for copying.

1. Technical Proposal:

- **15 pages maximum length, exclusive of letters of resumes, letters of reference or materials from the application packet. FNS reserves the right to reject any application with a technical proposal exceeding 15 pages in length.**
- **single-sided,**
- **unstapled, unbound,**
- **on 8 ½” X 11” white paper,**
- **single-spaced text**

- at least 1” margins on top, bottom, and sides
- 12-point font size
- numbered pages
- table of contents
- one page proposal summary that describes proposal and summarizes proposal activities

2. Appendices – to include only required supporting documentation that addresses the applicant’s capacity to carry out the proposed project. The maximum length is 15 pages.

- Resumes (limit to 2 pages per resume)
- Letters of Agreement from partners or collaborators

3. Resource Allocation Projections

Applicants are encouraged to submit a comprehensive resource allocation plan which is commensurate with the proposed project. This plan includes the cost of any planned formative research, resource testing, staff hours, materials, product development, product dissemination, travel, all deliverables, etc.

4. Assurance and Disclosure. The following forms must be completed and are attached to this RFA. Please note that completing the Survey on Ensuring Equal Opportunity is optional.

- Application for Federal Assistance, SF 424
- Assurances - Non-Construction Programs, SF 424B
- Disclosure of Lobbying Activities, SF LLL – Complete this form and indicate (yes or no) whether the applicant will conduct lobbying activities in regard to this solicitation.
- Survey on Ensuring Equal Opportunity for Applicants – OMB No. 1890-0014

X. SELECTION CRITERIA

All applications that meet the published deadline for submission will be screened for completeness and conformity to the requirements of this announcement. Only applications meeting the screening requirements will be reviewed competitively and scored against the technical evaluation criteria outlined below. A review panel will convene to determine the technical merit of each application and provide a numerical score. Proposals will be reviewed and evaluated to assess each applicant’s ability to carry out the campaign program using the following criteria and weights.

- 1. Soundness of Campaign Program Design and Management Plan** **25%**
Tasks and activities to be accomplished are outlined in detail, including an explanation of outreach strategies, event planning, product development and

dissemination, target audiences, etc. A timeline should provide adequate, realistic periods to complete the proposed activities and tasks.

The proposal contains a work plan for completing necessary activities in a timely manner, and reflects appropriate management quality control for deliverables. An organization chart that indicates who has authority over whom is provided. A written description of the organization chart is included. The discussion provides contingency plans to ensure that the project is not unduly disrupted by any unforeseen changes in key personnel.

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|-----------|---|-------------|
| 2. | <u>Capability and Experience of Staff</u> | 20% |
| | The proposal demonstrates a commitment of adequate staff experienced in disciplines critical to the successful completion of agreement objectives including, formative research if appropriate, program design, product development, and promotional and educational methodologies. Program director and other key staff are identified. The proposal reflects an assignment of staff made according to relevant experience and skill levels with appropriate time commitments for their roles and duties. Resumes are provided which demonstrate that staff have the appropriate technical and experiential backgrounds for their proposed roles. | |
| 3. | <u>Technical Approach</u> | 25% |
| | The proposal demonstrates a clear understanding of the purpose and technical issues associated with the cooperative agreement projects. It defines plans for utilizing innovative communication techniques using one or more information channels – such as the mass media, public service announcements, the internet, point-of-purchase materials, land-grant nutrition extension services, and school and community outreach efforts. The technical approach is appropriate to address the objectives in the context of the relevant issues. The proposal demonstrates an understanding of USDA’s mission to improve the diet and health of Americans. | |
| 4. | <u>Resource Allocation Plan</u> | 15% |
| | The proposed resource allocation plan is reasonable in relation to the scope and effort of the projects. The plan demonstrates consistency with project objectives and specific activities planned; the plan provides details on how costs were derived and how resources are allocated, by whom, and for which activities. | |
| 5. | <u>History of Past Experience & Support</u> | 15% |
| | The proposal demonstrates evidence of past experience and support of the <i>Dietary Guidelines for Americans</i> , the Food Guidance System, or other USDA nutrition related messages. The proposal also demonstrates evidence of completing comparable work effectively and on time; and includes references if available from past projects. FNCS may verify performance on past projects. | |
| | Total | 100% |

The awards will be made to those applicants whose proposals, when all criteria are considered, represent the best value to the Government.

XI. APPLICATION DUE DATE

The completed application package must **be received** by Lisa Johnson, the FNCS Grants Officer via mail on or before **5:00 PM Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) on October 31, 2005**. Late applications will not be accepted.

XII. SUBMIT APPLICATION

1. Submit application by hand delivery or by mail. We advise that you meet the deadline by delivering the application, or by mailing it sufficiently in advance of the deadline to ensure its timely receipt.
2. **One original and two copies** must be submitted. The original copy must be ready for copying (i.e. single-sided, unstapled, unbound and on 8 ½ x 11 paper). If you opt to mail your application we strongly suggest using a mail delivery service that guarantees delivery and allows you to track delivery. Faxed and emailed applications will **not** be accepted.
3. Late applications will not be considered in this competition. FNCS will not consider additions or revisions to the application once it has been received.
4. Applications should be addressed to:

**Lisa Johnson, Grants Officer
USDA: Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services
3101 Park Center Drive, Rm 738
Alexandria, VA 22302**

5. All questions regarding the application should be referred to Lisa Johnson via email at Lisa.Johnson@fns.usda.gov.